Ī

O wild West Wind, thou breath of Autumn's being, Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,

Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red, Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou, Who chariotest to their dark wintry bed

The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low, Each like a corpse within its grave, until Thine azure sister of the Spring shall blow

Her clarion o'er the dreaming earth, and fill (Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed in air) With living hues and odours plain and hill:

Wild Spirit, which art moving everywhere; Destroyer and preserver; hear, oh hear!

II

Thou on whose stream, mid the steep sky's commotion,

Loose clouds like earth's decaying leaves are shed, Shook from the tangled boughs of Heaven and Ocean,

Angels of rain and lightning: there are spread On the blue surface of thine aëry surge, Like the bright hair uplifted from the head

Of some fierce Maenad, even from the dim verge Of the horizon to the zenith's height, The locks of the approaching storm. Thou dirge

Of the dying year, to which this closing night Will be the dome of a vast sepulchre, Vaulted with all thy congregated might

Of vapours, from whose solid atmosphere Black rain, and fire, and hail will burst: oh hear!

Ш

Thou who didst waken from his summer dreams The blue Mediterranean, where he lay, Lull'd by the coil of his crystalline streams,

Beside a pumice isle in Baiae's bay, And saw in sleep old palaces and towers Quivering within the wave's intenser day, All overgrown with azure moss and flowers So sweet, the sense faints picturing them! Thou For whose path the Atlantic's level powers

Cleave themselves into chasms, while far below The sea-blooms and the oozy woods which wear The sapless foliage of the ocean, know

Thy voice, and suddenly grow gray with fear, And tremble and despoil themselves: oh hear!

IV

If I were a dead leaf thou mightest bear; If I were a swift cloud to fly with thee; A wave to pant beneath thy power, and share

The impulse of thy strength, only less free Than thou, O uncontrollable! If even I were as in my boyhood, and could be

The comrade of thy wanderings over Heaven, As then, when to outstrip thy skiey speed Scarce seem'd a vision; I would ne'er have striven

As thus with thee in prayer in my sore need. Oh, lift me as a wave, a leaf, a cloud! I fall upon the thorns of life! I bleed!

A heavy weight of hours has chain'd and bow'd One too like thee: tameless, and swift, and proud.

V

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is: What if my leaves are falling like its own! The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone, Sweet though in sadness. Be thou, Spirit fierce, My spirit! Be thou me, impetuous one!

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe Like wither'd leaves to quicken a new birth! And, by the incantation of this verse,

Scatter, as from an unextinguish'd hearth Ashes and sparks, my words among mankind! Be through my lips to unawaken'd earth

The trumpet of a prophecy! O Wind, If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

It is often remembered, on reading this poem, that the reference to 'Baiae's bay' prefigures the scene of Shelley's death by drowing at Lerici in La Spezia (Liguria, Italy), in 1822. Like Wordsworth, Shelley connects is affinity with the power of nature with his own childhood experience and the sheer exhiliaation of youth. Although he ends with a conventional paean to Spring, it is clear that he embraces the winter winds as the truer expression of his own 'uncontrollable' force of personality and imagination.